

just between us, did the love affair maim you all too well? by stardustupinlights

Series: you and me would be a big conversation [3]

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Summary:

Allegedly, this A list American movie actor with a long name keeps trying to hook up with this A+ list American singer despite the fact that he (allegedly) was almost charged with domestic violence against the singer, and the singer has (also allegedly) entered a new relationship. Who said quitters are ever winners?

Relationships: Apollo/Lucius Aelius Aurelius Commodus | Emperor Commodus (Percy Jackson), Apollo/Percy Jackson, Percy Jackson & Piper McLean

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Author's Note:

did you guys miss this au? i did

please read the tags, babes.

and have fun!

Despite the incessant glamour of it all, Percy has to admit that being Apollo's undercover secret plus one to events has its perks—namely, the priority parking and the inconspicuous drivers with their uncanny skill to lose the paparazzi. The back entrances to places to avoid said paparazzi, Percy feels is a bit too much, but by now he's seen enough of Apollo having to use eye drops and wearing sunglasses at night to know that prolonged exposure can really take a toll on someone.

The New York Tribeca apartment is probably Percy's favorite place, despite everyone and their mother being fully aware of who owns it. But it's a thirty-minute trip away from his own apartment so in the mornings it's easy to slip away unnoticed through the backdoor, and sometimes, he kidnaps Apollo with him, and no one ever knows.

He likes Apollo the most when he has traces of glitter around his face and a sleepy smile, still wearing whatever outfit he was fitted in, still humming along to whatever song he was performing and leaning their shoulders together as they make their way up the stairs, arms tangled. Like this, he tastes of champagne and cloves and a hint of cinnamon, and he's already the best thing Percy's ever had.

“Think I'm gonna take a shower,” Apollo mumbles once they get to the master bedroom, pressing a kiss against Percy's lips. He empties his pockets and hands Percy his phone, yawning as he winks. “Don't get naked without me. Or do. I wouldn't mind dessert.”

Percy rolls his eyes and kisses him again. “Don't take too long.”

Apollo hums and slips into the bathroom, while Percy abandons Apollo's phone on the bed and goes about undressing. He's down to his boxers and socks when Apollo's phone starts vibrating. Percy just glances at it; it could be his sister, or his agent, or Zeus. Either way, it can wait, since they just got out of a party and really, don't they know it's rude to call at three a.m.?

But the phone keeps ringing and vibrating. Percy puts on a hoodie he left in the empty drawer that Apollo's called Percy's for a month now and throws himself into the bed, picking up the phone and looking at the screen. There's a string of missed calls and messages.

The one visible on screen makes him freeze.

Lucius

You can't ignore me for long, you never have. Bet you miss me.

Percy knows checking your boyfriend's phone isn't upstanding, exactly. It's never okay. Which is why he leaves the phone on the bed and stares at the ceiling, questions rushing through his head. When he's managed to calm down, though, the phone vibrates with another message, and then a phone call. Annoyed, Percy hangs up the phone, then looks at the updated notification.

Since when do you play hard to get? We both know you're a slut. And we always have fun together.

Oh wow.

Percy almost gets taken over by a rushing, strong wave of rage, but he manages to just take a deep breath and makes the smart choice: he turns off the phone.

He waits until Apollo comes out of the shower, looking far more awake and sober than he was fifteen minutes ago. He has one of those hair bands on his forehead and his skin looks recently moisturized. As he stands before his dresser, after picking his glasses up from it, he slips into his underwear, which is when Percy can't resist anymore.

“Hey,” he calls. Apollo hums in acknowledgment, checking the box with his contacts. “Who's Lucius?”

Apollo visibly pauses, then lowers his contacts with rather apparent fake calm. He can't quite see his face on the mirror from the bed, but the tension in his shoulders speaks volumes. “Why are you asking?”

It's not the answer Percy wants, and Apollo can probably tell he fucked up because he's turning around as soon as he's done talking with wide eyes, hurrying towards the bed and crawling towards him. He doesn't even spare a look at the phone.

“Did someone tell you something?” He asks, and the genuinely edge of panic to his voice rubs Percy in all the wrong ways. “Percy?”

“He was calling you and texting you,” Percy presses his lips together, trying not to be mad, trying not to assume things. “So who is that?”

Apollo's assured him that he wants to be with him, and he's always been so earnest. He has no reason to not believe him if this is some big misunderstanding. He looks scared now, glancing at his phone like it might bite. Then he looks at Percy for a second, and something in him gives.

“It's Commodus,” he says, and Percy's heart starts beating wildly. He can already feel his face flushing. “It's his first name.”

“Why is he texting you?” Percy asks, his rising anger getting the best of him. Apollo winces. “From what little you've told me, you weren't exactly happy exes. Why don't you have him blocked?”

“Believe me, if I could, I would delete his presence from every aspect of my life. Even my music,” Apollo avoids his eyes and grabs his phone, turning it on. They sit in silence until the messages start popping up again, and that last one that Percy read has Apollo's breath catching, his face paling. He turns to look at Percy and holds his shoulder, shaking his head. “Baby, I—I'm so sorry you had to see that. He never knows when to stop.”

“I think calling you a slut like it's nothing is a little beyond just that,” Percy points out, only getting more annoyed. Something is off and Apollo seems to be closing in on himself instead of properly explaining himself, and Percy knows sometimes it's best to give people space, he does. But this is concerning. “Do you—do you even tell him off?”

Apollo helplessly looks down at his phone, uncharacteristically quiet. “Well, there's not really any point. He will just keep going. I gave up on fighting it a couple years ago.”

Percy takes a deep breath. “That's bullshit.”

“Percy—” Apollo looks at him with soft, hurt, broken eyes, skittish in how they dart all over his face. “Listen, our relationship was messy—”

“Harassing you goes beyond *messy*,” Percy snaps, and he hates the way Apollo swallows as if resigned. He leans in closer to him, taking his face between his hands and making him look at him. “That is not okay. I don't care why you have his number, delete it, or change yours—”

“He has all my numbers,” Apollo blurts out, and Percy feels something inside him shiver in both rage and hurt when he notices Apollo tearing up. He blinks it away fast, expert that he is hiding his feelings, and Percy *hates* it. “He'd get it easily from anyone else if I changed it, too. I've tried it. It's... it's been going on for years. I've gotten better at not... lingering.”

Percy looks at him, thinking about how relaxed he was before this came up. Thinking about glitter and cloves and cinnamon. He's never seen Apollo like this, and it feels unnatural. It feels wrong. He's supposed to ooze with confidence and talent, to burn with a quiet, cozy calm that sips right down to your bones.

“What did he do?” He asks, swallowing, his voice soft. Apollo flinches and Percy feels like crying himself. “Don't lie to me. What did he do to you?”

“Nothing, it was nothing,” Apollo denies, shaking his head, and actually standing from the bed, going back to his dresser. He takes off his headband and runs a shaking hand through his curls, looking like he's trying to

convince himself of the words as he says them. “It—well, he was just a little older than me when we dated, that’s all. He was the first person I, well, I was in love... and he’s married, he’s been married for a while—”

“*What?*” Percy can hardly believe his ears. Apollo winces, grabbing his comb, and Percy stands up and walks up behind him. They stare at each other through the mirror for a second, and then Percy sighs, softening his voice again, taking the comb from his hands. He starts running it through his hair, and he doesn’t miss the way Apollo wipes at his eyes. “Apollo, what? He’s—a cheater? And he talks to you like that?”

“His wife is for show,” Apollo licks his lips, relaxing just a little into his hands. Percy sees him picking at his nail polish and starts feeling like he just got a ton of bricks dropped on him. “She’s always been. They have a deal. I... I let him rope me. It was stupid. It was a mistake. It’s fine—”

“It’s *not* fine,” Percy insists. “You can’t let anyone treat you like that—”

“I can’t change it, Percy—”

“Yes, you can!” Percy raises his voice and Apollo full on flinches away this time. Percy freezes, looking down at him, and frowns. “Apollo, I’m sorry, I wasn’t—”

“It’s fine,” Apollo stands up, even though Percy isn’t done with his hair, and takes the comb from his hand. He looks frazzled and jumpy. To Percy’s astonishment, he actually reaches into his dresser and randomly pulls out pajamas, messing up the whole drawer in a way he’d never seen before. He slams it shut, making both of them jump, and then turns towards Percy, his eyes begging. “Can’t we just go to bed? I don’t like talking about it. It’s in the past. We made mistakes. It’s fine. I’ll—I’ll block him if you want.”

“It shouldn’t be just because I want that,” Percy tries, but Apollo is already walking to the bed and grabbing his phone. He does something, then shows him the screen—Commodus is blocked. Percy sighs. “Apollo—”

“Bed,” Apollo interrupts, and dresses in his pajamas, then quickly slips in bed. He looks at Percy in expectation. “Please? I’m tired, baby. Let’s just

sleep and forget about it.”

Percy stares at him. A part of him is tempted to leave—call the driver, walk out the backdoor. Go home. Let Apollo just... process this alone. But he thinks of Apollo by himself in the dark in this king-sized bed, and he wants to cry at that mental image.

Percy gets under the sheets with him and doesn't question it when Apollo turns off the lamp and presses himself to his chest, tucking his head under his chin. An odd image, because Apollo is so much thicker and taller than he is. Apollo does like being the little spoon, sometimes, but not like this. Not clinging to his hoodie and hiding his face from him. Percy can't help but duck his head, pushing him back a little, kissing his lips and then lower, at the skin of his neck and his collarbone, where a scar he doesn't really know the origins of lays. Apollo snuffles, and Percy holds him tighter. He resists the urge to address his tears.

He just hugs him, and swears to figure out what the fuck did Commodus do.

The next morning, when Percy wakes up, Apollo's already up and running, making eggs for breakfast. When Percy enters the kitchen, he's humming along to the radio, his hair done up in a bun. When he turns around, he has his morning nose mask on, and Percy figures he's already gone through his whole beauty routine. He's half-wondering, hesitant, if their conversation from last night changed anything.

But Apollo's eyes light up and his smile spreads across his lips like it always does, warm and easy and breathtaking, and Percy's filled with fondness that still feels quite *new*, exciting, like a candlelight bursting into a fireplace. And yet...

“Good morning, baby,” Apollo comes over to him, bending to kiss his forehead. Their eyes meet and Percy shivers a little because this early, when it's cloudy in New York, whenever Apollo looks at him his eyes go pale, and reflect color like looking into a swirl of blue, gold and green. He's so, so beautiful, and it's a contrast to the scared, fragmented look he wore last night. “Percy?”

He blinks and yawns, realizing he was spacing out. He can't quite get rid of the pit of anxiety in his belly, but for now he decides to leave it. Apollo has a trip to L.A later today and he won't be back for a couple days, so he just wraps his arms around his middle and presses his cheek against his shoulder, sighing.

"Let's go back to bed," he mumbles, but it's a feeble attempt at escaping reality. Apollo laughs and kisses the top of his head. "I mean it."

"After breakfast."

"Promise?"

"Of course."

A few hours later, Percy arrives at his place to find Piper going through his cupboards. She freezes with a Pop Tart in her hand, then waves at him, smiling wide. "Hey, dude! Didn't know you'd be back from your Apollo's this early."

Percy ignores the fact that she was just helping herself to his place—this is not the first time she's found her doing this, and he honestly doesn't mind it—and settles down on the kitchen counter, frowning, deciding to get right down to business.

"Piper," he says, voice serious, as she wrestles with the Pop Tart wrapper. "What was Apollo's relationship with Commodus like?"

She drops the Pop Tart on the ground, looking at him with wide eyes. "Uh, what?"

"The actor with the stupid name—he's an actor, right? That dude," Percy sighs, fidgeting with his hoodie's sleeves. He pulls out his phone from his pocket and unlocks it, glancing down at the Wikipedia page about him. "I looked him up on the way here, but it only says he had a short affair with him—"

Piper slams her hands down on the counter, looking at Percy with an apprehensive expression. “I don’t think you realize how serious this question is, Percy.”

“I think I do, actually,” Percy sighs, thinking again of Apollo’s terrified eyes last night. “Apollo got a few texts and calls from him last night. I knew they weren’t exactly good exes, but...”

“What did he tell you about him?” Piper asks. She usually doesn’t hold back so much when she wants to talk about celebrity drama, and Percy must admit it feels eerie. Like all the red flags from last night were just a sneak peek.

“That he was married and older than him, and mistakes were made,” Percy answers, and watches Piper’s expression sour with what looks like genuine rage. Percy looks down at his phone, glancing over at Commodus’ wiki. For the first time, since the first thing he did when he looked him up was search for Apollo’s name, he reads the first paragraph and freezes. “Wait, how old is Commodus?”

Piper winces like she can tell Percy is about to get hit by bad news. “Ten years older than Apollo.”

“When did they date?” Percy asks. Piper hesitates, and he glares at her. “Piper, when did they date?”

“The timeline is fuzzy. This—Percy, most details of their relationships are... hearsay, and stuff that never made it into the press but definitely made it online, and it’s not exactly a cozy warm piece of knowledge to have,” Piper says, more serious than he’s ever seen her in regards to anything relating to Apollo. He can’t tell if her fan-girl brain is off or on, and very, very focused on the real depth of this subject. “I can tell you if you want, but I thought you wanted to get to know Apollo the normal way.”

“I do,” Percy clears his throat, but he looks at the picture of Commodus in Wikipedia and feels his insides boiling already. “But I’m not just going to, to—sit back and let Apollo pretend he isn’t getting harassed by an ex. So, just... explain it to me.”

Piper takes a deep breath, looking over his face, then walks around the counter to sit next to him. Her backpack is resting on one of the chairs, and she grabs it as she settles, pulling out her laptop. Very quietly, so much so Percy's nerves start getting frayed, she opens up her browser and three tabs, typing a different address from memory in them.

One is for a Reddit forum, another for a Tumblr blog, and the last one seems to be an internet archive for TMZ. Piper turns the laptop towards him, clearing her throat. "Listen, man, I'll give you the basics, and then you can have your fill of these. I could never do it as much justice as these people that uh, pull together timelines and social media posts and shit. I just want to ask you again, are you *sure*?"

Percy swallows, glancing at the screen open on the Reddit forum. The name reads *Private Apollo/Commodus Affair and Scandal*, and the description says its run by fans who have been looking out for Apollo since he started his career and actively try to fight back against older men in Hollywood being manipulative. Just that already has Percy bracing for a headache.

"I'm sure," he confirms. It feels slimy, and wrong. He should be calling Apollo. He should be pressing the issue to him, make sure he is actually okay, but he has a feeling, with all he knows about the industry from Piper's babbling, Thalia's steady presence in his life, and what he's seen while being with Apollo, he doesn't think he'll ever yield. "Just... rip off the band-aid."

"Okay, then. Apollo and Commodus met each other when Apollo was seventeen—"

Percy chokes. "*Seventeen?*"

"Yeah, seventeen," Piper wrinkles her nose, and opens the pinned post on the Reddit forum. Percy's greeted with a plethora of links, most of them from internet archives. Piper points to the first one. "That's the article that confirms it—very early on in his career, Apollo did a couple songs for this one movie soundtrack, and Commodus was the main actor. It actually has quotes from third-parties about seeing them hang out and a picture of them together."

“And when did they start dating?” Percy can barely recognize his own voice, already. “Please don’t tell me it was right away.”

“It wasn’t,” Piper presses her lips together, and points to the second link. “They didn’t interact publically again until after Apollo turned eighteen, but the Tumblr blog here, well—it has some compelling speculation about them possibly being in contact during that time.”

“No,” Percy lets out, shaking his head. “No, no, wait, but *you* told me all about how Apollo’s first albums were about breakups—”

“I don’t think Commodus and Apollo were, uh, exclusive,” Piper drums her fingers on the kitchen counter, wincing. “Like, Commodus was already married. And most of Apollo’s songs are about being on and off with someone, even back then, you know? The fact that their relationship ever came out was because they were caught by TMZ at some point, arguing in a car. There’s even a video. The site deleted most posts about it because, uh, well, Apollo was still under twenty, I’m pretty sure they got a cease and desist. That’s what the internet archives are for.”

“So this dude is a fucking creep,” Percy lets out a shaky breath, feeling dizzy. He thinks about those messages again, and feels like ants are crawling on his skin. “Holy shit, how can Apollo handle this?”

“It’s what everyone on those sites wonders,” Piper admits, looking disgusted herself. “Like, I don’t know what you saw, and I honestly don’t think I want to know, but I’ve read all the details about it and it gets worse. I can’t believe Apollo hasn’t sued him, or at least isn’t like, seeing a therapist.”

“It gets worse?” Percy repeats, baffled. Piper nods. “How could it get worse?”

“Well, they were on and off, right? Allegedly,” Piper rolls her eyes. “But they were often seen together by people and there’s like hundreds of insider reports about them having to buy pap pics to avoid getting their relationship all over the press again. The most obvious thing though, is when Apollo

turned twenty-one, and there was this massive party, and everyone outside of social media talks about how Apollo spent the whole night sobbing.”

“Why?” Percy asks, but he feels like he already knows the answer.

“Because Commodus said he’d be there,” Piper shrugs. “Dude even made a happy birthday social media post about how he was sorry he couldn’t make it. Then Apollo put out a song that basically confirmed it, and then the year after that all these police reports leaked—”

“Police reports,” Percy repeats. He feels like he’s going to have an aneurysm. “Why did the police get involved?”

“Apollo’s L.A neighbors were calling almost every night complaining about loud arguing,” Piper pauses, taking a deep breath, and goes to the Tumblr page. Then, she hesitates. “Nothing got filed until it got... physical.”

Percy’s blood runs cold. “Physical how?”

“I’m gonna need you to calm down first, okay?” Piper says, setting a hand on his shoulder. Percy realizes how tense he is and takes a few deep breaths, but they admittedly don’t do much for him. Piper shakes her head. “Percy, I’m not sure I should—”

“I need to know,” Percy breathes out, closing his eyes for a few seconds. He tries to remember the breathing techniques from his military days. He goes through them, exercise by exercise, and then he nods, opening his eyes when his heart slows. “Listen, I’m okay, I’m fine. I just... I need to know. I don’t want all the details just—what happened?”

Piper stares at him for a second, and once again, his determination to do this gets through to her. “Commodus started to get drunk before going to Apollo’s place, which is what all the screaming was about. Then he started to get violent. And things escalated. The staff of private doctors that rich people go to started leaking out information about how far it really went. It included pictures. So did the police reports. It wasn’t pretty.”

“Are you telling me my boyfriend’s ex physically abused him?” Percy says, his voice muted. The silence after the question makes Percy’s ears ring. “Piper, is that what you’re telling me?”

“Yeah,” Piper sighs, blinking moisture from her eyes. “I—I don’t wanna talk about it but it’s all on the sites. The last few instances all happened during a month and after that their relationship finally died. Romantically, at least. The general consensus is that Commodus keeps fucking his way through all the young stars but when he gets bored he starts trying to get in contact with Apollo only to be greeted by a wall of lawyers.”

“How come no one knows this?” Percy whispers, burying his face in his hand. “Piper, how is he not in jail?”

“Hollywood is fucked up, man,” Piper shakes her head. “You know how Zeus is. He’s made sure Apollo’s image always looked one way. The last incident with Commodus according to the police reports was so ugly, Percy, they didn’t even try to hide it with makeup that time—there’s dozens of news articles saying how he fell down some stairs while drunk. He wasn’t seen for two months afterwards and when he was, it was like nothing happened.”

“I—” Percy chokes on the words, shaking his head. “Apollo *told me* nothing happened. Does he... God, Piper, does he really believe that?”

“He might be under a NDA,” Piper shrugs, subtly trying to wipe her eyes. “I don’t know, Percy.”

He opens his mouth—he’s not sure what he’s going to say; maybe he’ll just scream at the void—but Piper’s phone starts ringing and she curses, pulling it from her pocket. “Shit, that’s Shel. I forgot I agreed to meet her at the library today.”

“Go,” Percy runs a hand through his hair. Piper stares at him like she wants to argue, but he just waves her away. “No, Piper, go—I’ll be fine, I’m just... I’m angry, okay?”

“Of course you are,” Piper shakes her head. “Hell, I am. If I ever see that guy on the street I’m probably running him over. Did you know he worked with my dad? He was a fucking asshole the whole time. It’s—it’s so awful. Are you... gonna talk to Apollo about it?”

Percy closes his eyes. “I don’t know, honestly. I’m just... I need a moment.”

“Sure,” Piper sighs, glances at her laptop, then at him. “Are you... gonna keep reading?”

“Probably,” Percy admits, because there’s no use in lying to himself. “I guess.”

“I’ll take your laptop, then, if that’s okay?” Piper asks, and Percy shrugs, nodding. She smiles at him, grabbing her backpack and pocketing her phone. Then, she hugs him after she stands, his face against her neck, as she caresses his back and his hair. “I’m so sorry, Percy.”

“I am too,” he says, and they leave it at that.

Once Piper leaves, Percy turns towards her laptop, and finds the links for the police reports. There are at least a dozen instances of physical violence across a period of three, almost four months. Not all of them have pictures, except for the last few. Percy hesitates before deciding that it’s best to just look at the last one, the one that was covered up by an excuse of falling down some stairs.

When the picture loads, Percy has to force himself to keep his eyes open. He registers a, at most, twenty-two year old Apollo, sitting in what looks like a private clinic room. He looks like he got beat up with clean fists; his nose is visibly broken and his lip is busted. His eyes are closed and he can see swelling. There’s a wound in his head wetting his blond hair with blood and glass from what looks to be a bottle all over his shirtless collarbone.

Percy pauses. He thinks of the scars on Apollo’s skin, so small but rather pale, littered over his chest and his arms. He thinks of the long one across his collarbone that Percy always kisses, that he’s always wondered out loud

how he got, how Apollo's always deflected the question with a smile and a wink, giving it an air of mystery. Well, now he knows.

Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck, shit. Percy's going to kill someone. He wants to scream; how could this happen? How could anyone look at Apollo, who's proven to be lonely, who's told him about his depressive episodes, who pours his everything into his music and doesn't blink twice when someone is rude to him, who remembers the name of every kid he's ever met and looks at Percy like he hung up the sun in the sky, and think of hurting him?

He feels sick. He feels dirty. He slams Piper's laptop shut and he can't decide what to do, so he doesn't do anything. Percy grabs a box of Pop Tarts and heads into his room, lays on the bed, stares at the walls and the ceiling boiling and simmering in his rage.

Then, he decides to text Apollo. He thinks about it so, so hard, before he sends it, rewrites it several times, hesitates, changes his mind at least five times until he settles on something simple instead:

I miss you.

When Apollo comes back to New York, Percy is already waiting for him at the Tribeca apartment. He's been camping out here ever since Apollo left the city, feeling like he needed a more physical piece of Apollo with him. He kept researching Apollo's relationship with Commodus, trying to get a timeline in his head without getting too many other details that he'd rather hear from Apollo, whenever he feels ready to.

It might have led him down the rabbit hole of his other two relationships, which are much more recent, and their own complications; the model guy that left him for someone else after they got inappropriately engaged only after a year of knowing each other, and the actress that didn't seem to be as in love as Apollo was and probably cheated on him.

This, in turn, meant a crash course with Piper on his discography. He might have made a few playlists per ex in order to be super petty and have it all organized in his head. It's fine.

The only thing he cares about right now is the naked joy and surprise in Apollo's face when he walks into the master bedroom and finds Percy in bed with his three cats. Apollo had left them with their usual professional caretaker for when he's away, but all Percy had to do is make a call and she gladly handed them over.

"Baby," Apollo lets out, his voice already full of emotion. Lester, who was licking Percy's hand, perks up at his voice and immediately bolts at him, meowing. Meg meows, as well, but she's a tough cat so she just stays on top of Percy's chest. Asclepius, who is far more dignified, remains napping. "*Babies*, oh my god—this is the best day of my life."

Percy snorts. "I thought that was the day you met me."

"I have a list," Apollo says, picking Lester up and slipping out of his shoes, then getting into bed with him. He is careful not to disturb Meg and Asclepius, who has now decided to wake and blinks blearily at him before promptly trying to climb on his shoulder. Apollo laughs. "Yes, fuck, best day *ever*."

"I think you have too many cats," Percy snorts, moving to curl into Apollo's chest. Meg doesn't appreciate him doing that, and decides to settle at the feet of the bed instead, turning her back to them because she's dramatic like that.

"I don't have enough cats, actually," Apollo refutes, and then finally presses a kiss against his lips. It's long and wet and Percy can taste cinnamon and lip gloss on him. God, he's in so deep for him. "What are you doing here?"

"I missed you," Percy mumbles, burying his face in his neck. Apollo hums, and Percy's feeling so, so clingy, so he throws a leg over Apollo's waist and pulls him in even further. "I missed you a lot. And I... I don't feel like you left in the best of moods, and I'm sorry about that."

Apollo starts scratching his scalp and Percy melts against him. "What do you mean?"

“The messages from you ex,” Percy says, because he knows Apollo knows what he means. The silence that results proves that. “I might have looked up some things about him.”

“Percy,” Apollo starts, his voice soft. He sounds hesitant and scared, but Percy just hugs him even closer, and that seems to give him a little encouragement. “I... I don’t like talking about it, you know? I half-thought you already knew. All my exes, even my hook-ups, they all looked it up, they all knew. I assumed we didn’t have to... address it.”

“I like you for you, you know? I’ve always wanted to just... know you,” Percy reminds him, leaning back to look at him. He’s got tears in his eyes. Percy traces his cheek with a finger, remembering those pictures. Then his neck. His collarbone, the long line of his scar. “I’m pretty sure you wrote a whole song about it, actually.”

“I did,” Apollo laughs, a short and nervous sound. “I didn’t have the best reaction to your questions, did I?”

“No, it was—I get it,” Percy shakes his head. “I just got so mad, because I can’t understand how anyone could do that to you.”

Apollo frowns a little, biting his lip. “I’m not all good, you know? I’ve done things I’m not proud of, all those lies... and I’ve turned my eyes away too.”

“I know,” Percy sighs. “But you alone can’t shoulder it all, either. You’re one person, not just a brand. You can be honest with me. You can trust me.”

“I know I can,” Apollo echoes back, and presses their foreheads together. They don’t say anything for a moment, and then Apollo sighs. “Listen, Commodus, Lucius—I’ve been wanting to tarnish his name for ages. I think everyone I know hates him. It’d be easy. But I need some time before I can do that myself, you know?”

“He hurt you,” Percy says, nodding. His voice chokes up. “Of course you need time. Did you... did you ever get help?”

“For a bit, yes,” Apollo shrugs. “But you can’t really be famous and go to therapy without the sessions leaking out somehow. I stopped. Fear just... grips me. It always has.”

“If you ever need to talk about...” Percy presses a kiss on his lips, looking into his eyes. “You can come to me, okay? But maybe... maybe you should at least go to a session once in a while, you know?”

“Maybe,” Apollo closes his eyes for a second as if he wants to fight that idea, yet he yields. “I’ll consider it.”

“Thank you,” Percy breathes out, kissing him again. This one is longer, lingering. Percy wishes he could do it forever. “I do wanna know one thing, though. Just... just to soothe my mind.”

“Of course,” Apollo nods. “What is it?”

“Did you fight back?”

Apollo’s eyebrows raise to his hairline, then he snorts. His smile is both a little embarrassed and a little guilty. “I may have choked him, yes.”

“Good,” Percy feels a wave of relief wash over him. Thank fucking God. “Good. But if I see him on the street, I will fucking destroy him.”

“I can’t kiss you if you’re in jail,” Apollo pouts, and Percy laughs, shaking his head.

They spend the rest of the day cuddling, and at one point when they move to the living room, the mood feels just right, and Percy gets to his knees, determined to show Apollo without words how wonderful he thinks he is. He’s just glad the cats don’t interrupt this time.

There are few things in life that are perfect, but this, right here, Apollo’s arm around his waist and his fingers against his skin, is very damn close to it.

Author's Note:

thanks for reading!

also btw ashilrak and i have a perpollo discord server!

<https://discord.gg/T7gZ39uwJG>

come join the cult :)